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Viewing cable 05TELAVIV4107, MOSSAD CHIEF ON WEAKNESS OF SYRIA, PREDICTS NO

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- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
05TELAVIV4107	2005-06-29 13:24	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Tel Aviv

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"C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 004107

SIPDIS

NEA FOR WELCH, CHENEY/DIBBLE, E.
NSC FOR ABRAMS/DANIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/20/2010
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MNUC](#) [IR](#) [SY](#) [IS](#) [GOI](#) [EXTERNAL](#)
SUBJECT: MOSSAD CHIEF ON WEAKNESS OF SYRIA, PREDICTS NO
CHANGE IN IRAN

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Mossad Chief Meir Dagan told NEA A/S David Welch, Deputy National Security Advisor Elliott Abrams, and the Ambassador June 17 that, despite the weakness of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, he is unlikely to be replaced any time soon. Syria,s neighbors prefer to keep Assad in power but weak, as Syria is then less likely to meddle in the affairs of its neighbors. On Iran, Dagan predicted that former president Rafsanjani will win the elections, but that little will change in Iran regardless: Iran will continue to seek even incremental escape from its suspension agreement with the EU-3. Dagan said he thought a UN Security Council resolution codifying the EU-3 agreement would provide a better mechanism for taking action against constant low-level Iranian violations. End Summary.

Syria -- Bashar Is Weak

¶2. (C) In a meeting with visiting NEA A/S David Welch, Deputy National Security Advisor Elliott Abrams, and the Ambassador June 17, Mossad Chief Meir Dagan said that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is very weak. Despite having built up an atmosphere of what Dagan called "dramatic political

change,"" after the recent Ba'ath Party Congress, it became clear that ""nothing in Syria is changing."" That being said, Dagan continued, there are now liberal elements willing to risk demonstrations against the government. Discussion of the return of Rifat al-Assad, and graffiti in Syria proclaiming his return, are both signs that Bashar is becoming weaker. The process of removing the old guard in Syria continues, Dagan said, but reiterated his initial point that even that does not signify any genuine change.

13. (C) Despite Bashar's weakness, Dagan did not predict that he would be driven from power any time soon. If a leadership change were to occur at some future point, Dagan and his team predicted that any successor would come from within the elites: ""there are no dark horse candidates out there."" Neighboring countries have a genuine fear that radicals could replace Bashar in Syria; there is a widespread and strong preference for a weak -- but present -- Bashar al-Assad. If an acceptable alternative were to present himself, that equation, however, might change. The most important thing to the Syrian elites remains the continued control of the Allawites on power.

14. (C) Asked how Syria views the United States, Dagan said that the Syrians ""take your politeness as compromise."" Syria, in Dagan's view, will be less inclined to meddle in the affairs of its neighbors if a weakened Bashar al-Assad remains in place. On the other hand, weakness in Syria means that Syria will be unable to control the Syria-Iraq border. Change in Syria will also have negative consequences in Lebanon, Dagan predicted.

Iran -- No Change

15. (C) Dagan and his team said they were assuming that former president Rafsanjani would be re-elected in Iran, even if the voting necessitated going to a second round. As president, Dagan predicted that Rafsanjani would espouse the same tough ideas as his predecessors, but with ""better packaging."" Ayatollah Khamenei still remains very much on the scene, Dagan pointed out, further evidence that the presidential elections will not signify substantive policy change.

16. (C) Dagan asserted that Iran will continue the same policy regarding Iraq, hoping to see the Shi'a gain real power there through elections. Dagan predicted that Iran's nuclear policy would also remain the same, as would their policies towards Hizballah. Mossad had at last discovered how Iran Hizballah is moving money to Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Dagan said, having actually seen Iranian agents hand over the cash to PIJ operatives. Iran has in the past proven that it can rein in Hizballah when it suits them.

17. (C) Dagan said that Iran is very susceptible to, and should ""always remain under, constant pressure."" As an example, Dagan said that European pressure had actually delayed work in the Kashan nuclear site, with a number of workers having been transferred elsewhere. DNSA Abrams said that the U.S. opposes any compromises on Iran's nuclear program that might lead to Iran's development of the nuclear fuel cycle, and will press the Europeans to maintain a tough line. Dagan said that Iran wants ""more than anything"" to break out of the suspension, and that even the "" tiniest compromise"" that leaves the door open for later discussion is sufficient. DNSA Abrams agreed, adding that even a 100% suspension with the understanding that the suspension is voluntary would do, given Iran's incremental negotiating style.

18. (C) Dagan said that Israel would like more IAEA safeguards imposed on Iran, using the safety checks as a vehicle for more inspections and tighter IAEA control. A UN Security Council resolution that requires cessation of all prohibited activity would also be useful, as it would translate the EU-3 demands into binding form. Dagan's staff asserted that there had already been sufficient violations of the EU-3 suspension agreement of IAEA requirements in the last five months to pave the way for a UNSC resolution.

19. (U) A/S Welch and DNSA Abrams cleared this message.

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KURTZER
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